



Background

This document is designed to provide risk management and safety parameters for an agency to consider when developing and implementing a telecommuting program. Before an agency implements such a program, it should develop a specific telecommuting policy and procedures that includes expectations around risk management and safety. Failure to maintain a proper and safe work environment, in accordance with this policy, may be cause for terminating the Remote Work agreement.

Employers and employees are both responsible for ensuring a safe work environment, whether an employee works from an office location or from the home. No matter of work location, employees face similar types of hazards and risk, such as:

- Work-related injuries and illness including but not limited to manual material handling and slips, trips, and falls
- Ergonomics
- Fire prevention
- Ventilation
- Electrical Safety
- Property damage to equipment
- Injuries to workplace visitors (strongly discouraged)

For more detailed telecommuting guidance and information, agencies should review the [State of Wisconsin Human Resources Handbook Chapter 746](#).

Guidance

Telecommuting requires a work environment that allows for uninterrupted and productive work, while also ensuring all employees maintain a healthy, safe, and ergonomically sound work environment while working in the office or at a remote location. The major difference between the employer's office and the home office is ownership and control over the workplace. By entering into a remote work agreement, an employee acknowledges that they have a healthy, safe, and ergonomically sound work environment. When creating a telecommuting policy, agencies should consider the following:

Workspace and Equipment

- The employee should ensure, and affirm to the agency as requested, that they have appropriate and ergonomically correct equipment, including an adjustable ergonomic chair that corresponds to appropriate work surface, to safely perform the job without increased risk of injury and should establish minimum safety requirements.
- The employee should affirm that they have a reasonable supporting structure and location to perform their work responsibilities and safely maintain State equipment. A mutually agreed upon dedicated workspace should be established between the Supervisor and the employee (photographs of workspace and setup are encouraged for documentation). Any deviations should be consulted with Supervisor prior to relocating. Please note that lifting or moving large furniture or similar equipment should be avoided unless a reasonable safe plan is agreed upon with direct supervisor. Criteria needs to be established to maintain the premise.
- The employee should be required to:
 - View the [online Office Ergonomics Self-Tutorial](#)
 - Complete the Safety and Ergonomic Checklists (attached)
- The workspace should have the following safety equipment:
 - Smoke detector
 - Surge protector(s)
 - Adjustable ergonomic chair
 - Desk that corresponds to adjustable ergonomic chair

- Adequate lighting
- Secured perimeter and viewing of confidential information
- Employees should be required to complete an asset inventory form for any State property kept at the telecommuting location.

Work site visits

If site safety visits are conducted, they should be performed by a qualified safety/ergonomic specialist or outside consultant who conducts an ergonomic workstation assessment and general safety inspection.

Additionally, State employees or agents may make on-site visits at the employee's alternate work site for conferring with the employee, and/or maintaining, repairing, inspecting, and/or retrieving State equipment, materials, software, supplies, data, records and/or documents. If legal action would be necessary to regain possession of State equipment, materials, software, supplies, data, records and/or documents, the employee will be responsible to pay the legal costs incurred by the State, including attorney's fees, should the State prevail.

Telecommuting Workplace Visitors and Activities Guidance

Although telecommuting is strongly discouraged if an employee will be seeing clients and business visitors in the home, an agency may determine it is appropriate for such an employee to telecommute. Because of the additional risks associated with having business visitors in the home, the following criteria is recommended for these cases:

- Employees who have business visitors should have a minimum of \$500,000 homeowner's insurance general liability coverage. All other telecommuting employee's insurance minimums should be considered on a case-by-case basis. No additional insured provision or indemnification is necessary.
- Employees who see clients should be subject to drive by checks of the residence to ensure visitor safety. If deficiencies are found in the maintenance/upkeep of accessible areas (such as the driveway, sidewalk, and stoops), the employee should be given a reasonable amount of time (60-90 days) to make corrections/improvements, with no visitors allowed until the corrections are made.
- An understanding that prohibited at-home activities while telecommuting include, but are not limited to:
 - non-work activities, including basic homemaking tasks such as dishes, laundry, substance abuse, etc.
 - Meetings and visitors, unless pre-approved and kept to a minimum. Most meetings should take place at the agency office.
 - Childcare and elderly care

Workers Compensation

- If an employee sustains an injury while working remotely, workers compensation (Chapter 102) may apply just as if an injury occurred in the office or on the worksite. However, each situation will be reviewed by DOA Risk Management on a case-by-case basis to determine compensability. If an employee does sustain an injury while working remotely, they should notify their supervisor immediately.
- If an employee reports an injury, the agency should gather as much specific information as possible, especially where and how the injury occurred. This information will help the worker's compensation adjuster determine if the injury was in the course and scope of employment and caused by the employment.
- To reduce workers compensation exposure and liability, it is highly recommended that remote work be for complete days at that sole approved location, and that commuting between locations be limited as much as possible.
- The agency has the right to inspect the premise with reasonable notice and reserves the right to inspect the premises post-injury.

For more detailed workers compensation guidance and information, please review the [Bureau of State Risk Management workers compensation web page](#).

Insurance and Personal Property

- Employees agree to have homeowners/condo/renters General Liability (homeowners with liability coverage) insurance coverage in place, and the agency reserves the right to request the employee provide evidence of insurability. In the event an employee is using the home other than as a remote work location, such as for hosting business visitors, it is the employee's responsibility to have agency approval, and additional limits of insurance may be required. The State will not be responsible for any costs associated with the purchase of any personal insurances.
- Employee personal property is not covered by the State's self-funded property program; however, if personal property is used for business purposes for the benefit of the State and used within the employee's scope of employment, considerations for coverage may be given. For coverage to be applicable, the employee must communicate to their agency what property is to be considered and be approved by the agency and reported by that agency in its annual property values submitted to the Bureau of State Risk Management. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that any personal property is insured.
- State coverage is primary for state property, subject to the deductible. The State does not insure cash or securities.

Telecommuting Safety Checklist

The following checklist is designed to 1) help you assess the safety of your alternate work area, and 2) facilitate communication and clarify expectations between employees and employers with respect to safety issues. Please read and answer each question.

Upon completion, please sign and review the checklist with your supervisor. Note: A no response to the following questions does not automatically disqualify an employee from telecommuting.

Name: _____ **Job Title:** _____

Agency/Institution: _____ **Work Unit:** _____

Home Address: _____

		Yes	No
1.	Are lighting levels adequate for the work that is being performed?		
2.	Are the stairs with four or more steps equipped with handrails?		
3.	Is all electrical equipment free of recognized hazards such as frayed or loose wires?		
4.	Are electrical cords double insulated and/or equipped with three prong plugs?		
5.	Are there enough electrical outlets in the work area with sufficient electrical capacity to avoid overloading?		
6.	Are surge protectors, with a built in circuit breaker, used for computers, and printer?		
7.	Are halls, doorways, corners, work areas and exits free of obstructions and tripping hazards?		
8.	Are file cabinets and the computer workstation level and stable?		
9.	Is the work area maintained within a temperature range of 68 to 76 degrees?		
10.	Are phone lines and electrical cords secured and out of the way?		
11.	Is the carpet or tile in the workspace secure and free of tears, lumps and loose pieces?		
12.	Are materials arranged and/or stored within easy reach?		
13.	Is a smoke detector located on each level of the home and are the batteries changed at least semi-annually?		
14.	Are the stairs and sidewalks outside the premises in good condition and free of tripping hazards?		
15.	Reviewed the Bureau of State Risk Management Slip, Trip and Fall and Safe Lifting Injury Prevention Manuals ?		

Telecommuting Ergonomic Checklist

The following checklist is designed to 1) help you determine if your workstation is properly arranged from an ergonomic perspective, and 2) facilitate communication and clarify expectations between employees and employers with respect to ergonomic issues. Please read and answer each question. Upon completion, please sign and review the checklist with your supervisor. Note: A no response to the following questions does not automatically disqualify an employee from telecommuting.

		Yes	No
1.	Reviewed the Bureau of State Risk Management Office Ergonomics Self-Assessment Tool & Other Ergonomics resources ?		
2.	Is your chair adjustable?		
3.	Is your back fully supported by a backrest?		
4.	Are your thighs parallel to the floor and your knees at a 90-110 degree angle when sitting at your workstation?		
5.	Are your feet flat on the floor or supported by a footrest?		
6.	Is the monitor approximately 18-30 inches from your eyes? Note: If you work with a monitor which is <u>17 inches or larger</u> , you may need to move the monitor a few inches farther away.		
7.	Is the top of the monitor slightly below your eye level? Note: If you wear prescription glasses, you may need to position the monitor differently.		
8.	Is the monitor directly in front of you?		
9.	Is the screen positioned to minimize glare and reflections from overhead lights, windows and other light sources?		
9.	Are documents placed next to the monitor and at the same distance height as the screen? If not, use a document holder.		
10.	Is the height and angle of the keyboard adjusted to keep your wrist in a straight (neutral) position?		
11.	Are your elbows bent at a 90-degree angle when your hands are resting on the keyboard?		
12.	Is the screen's brightness and contrast controls set for optimal viewing?		
13.	Is your head upright and shoulders relaxed when you are looking at the screen?		
14.	Is the mouse positioned close to the keyboard and at the same level?		
15.	Do you have adequate leg room under your desk?		
16.	Are your arms and elbows close to your body when typing?		
17.	Do you use a headset or speaker phone if you use the phone frequently?		
18.	Do you periodically change positions, stand up and/or stretch?		